

Following development of the evidence, OWCP, by decision dated March 1, 2019, denied appellant's traumatic injury claim on the factual component because the evidence of record did not support that the January 14, 2019 exposure occurred as alleged. It concluded, therefore, that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury as defined by FECA. Additionally, OWCP noted that appellant had filed a prior occupational disease claim (Form CA-2) in OWCP File No. xxxxxx158 for an injury caused by workplace mold exposure, which would be addressed in a separate decision. It noted that the alleged employment-related mold exposure in the claim in

OWCP File No. xxxxxx158 and the current claim in OWCP File No. xxxxxx215 occurred over a period much longer than one shift

On March 19, 2019 appellant requested reconsideration and submitted additional evidence. He contended that he submitted test results, photographs, and witness statements that were sufficient to establish that he was exposed to mold at work, as well as medical evidence sufficient to establish that he had an asthmatic reaction after being exposed to mold.

By decision dated May 16, 2019, under OWCP File No. xxxxxx215, OWCP denied modification of its March 1, 2019 decision. It again referenced appellant's claim for mold exposure under OWCP File No. xxxxxx158.

The Board has duly considered the matter and concludes that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when a new injury is reported for an employee who previously filed a claim for a similar injury and further indicates that the cases should be administratively combined as soon as the need to do so becomes apparent.<sup>1</sup> The record reflects that appellant filed an occupational disease claim in OWCP File No. xxxxxx158 and, thereafter, filed the current traumatic injury claim for the same condition. As both claims involve an asthmatic reaction to the exposure of mold, the claims must be administratively combined for a full and fair adjudication of appellant's present claim. This will allow OWCP to consider all relevant claim files and accompanying evidence in developing appellant's current traumatic injury claim.

The case shall therefore be remanded for OWCP to administratively combine OWCP File Nos. xxxxxx215 and xxxxxx158. Following this and other such further development as deemed necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *Doubling Case Files*, Chapter 2.400.8(c)(1) (February 2000); *see R.R.*, Docket No. 20-0911 (issued October 30, 2020); *T.M.*, Docket Nos. 09-1090 and 09-2226 (issued March 8, 2010).

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT** the May 16, 2019 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: March 4, 2022  
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Patricia H. Fitzgerald, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Valerie D. Evans-Harrell, Alternate Judge  
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board